

FIRST CHAPTER

Examination of Conditions

The first verse of chapter one introduces the first part of the *Fundamental Wisdom*: describing the lack of inherent existence of dependent arising. This section sets forth the selflessness of both phenomena and persons; chapter one explains the emptiness of phenomena through an examination of the agency and action with respect to a cause and its effect.

The *Fundamental Wisdom* says:

1.
Neither from itself nor from another
Nor from both
Nor without cause
Does anything, anywhere, ever arise.

An alternative translation of the first verse is:

1.
Not from itself, not from something different,
Not from both and not without a cause
Does any thing, anywhere,
ever arise.

This verse presents the fourfold reasoning that establishes the emptiness of arising. Among the eight attributes of dependent arising, the two verses of homage of the *Fundamental Wisdom* mention the emptiness of ceasing first (**does not cease, does not arise**, and so forth). However, since it is easier to understand the lack of inherent existence of ceasing after having understood the lack of inherent existence of arising, the remaining verses of the *Fundamental Wisdom* explain the emptiness of arising first.

The meaning of the first verse is that an impermanent phenomenon does not arise inherently because (1) it does **not** arise **from itself**; (2) it does **not** arise **from something** inherently **different**; (3) it does **not** arise **from both**—itself and something inherently different—and (4) it does **not** arise **without a cause** since there is **no thing, anywhere** that **ever arises** in any of these four ways.

The last reason indicates that no external or internal impermanent phenomenon, at any place, at any time or owing to any philosophical system¹ ever arises from itself, from something inherently different, and so forth.

This four-part reason is called the *diamond slivers reasoning* (Tib. *rdo rje gzegs ma'i gtan tshigs*) because each reason is a powerful means of eliminating the root misconception.

Please note, that if an impermanent phenomenon's arising were to exist inherently, the phenomenon would arise either from a cause or without a cause. If it were to arise from a cause, it would arise from a cause that was (a) of the same nature as itself, (b) inherently different from it or (c) both—the same nature as itself and inherently different from it. Therefore, if arising were to exist inherently, there would be only four possibilities: an impermanent phenomenon would arise (1) from itself, (2) from something inherently different, (3) from both, or (4) without a cause.

These four extreme ways of arising are asserted by different Indian philosophical systems:

Arising from itself

The first possibility, arising from itself, is asserted by the school of the non-theistic Samkhyas (Tib: *grangs can lha med pa*), an ancient non-buddhist philosophical system that does not accept the existence of a creator god. The Samkhyas maintain that a result such as a sunflower, for example, arises from causes and conditions that are pervaded by a single primal substance (Skt. *prakṛti*, Tib. *spyi gtso bo*).

Therefore, the nature of its substantial cause, a sunflower seed, would be of the same nature as its conditions: water, warmth, and so forth. Likewise, the nature of the sunflower and the nature of its causes and conditions would also be the same.

As they accept that the sunflower seed and the sunflower are not the same, they are not saying that the sunflower arises from the sunflower itself. Nevertheless, when they assert that the sunflower arises from its seed and from its own nature—since they maintain that the two natures are the same—the sunflower must arise from its own nature and a non-manifest sunflower must exist at the time of its cause. This is how they uphold the notion of something arising from itself.

¹ Buddhist philosophical systems such as the Chittamatra school, for instance, assert that impermanent phenomena arise from inherently different causes because according to them, all phenomena exist inherently. However, that doesn't mean that *owing to* or *through the power of* these philosophical schools, phenomena actually exist in such a way.



According to the view of the non-theistic Samkhyas, since the sunflower seed and the resultant sunflower are of the same nature, the sunflower arises from its own nature and a non-manifest sunflower must exist at the time of its cause.

Refutation of arising from itself

The refutation of arising from itself (or from something that is of the same nature) is based on demonstrating the logical absurdities or consequences of this possibility:

If a sunflower existed at the time of the sunflower seed, it would follow that there would be no point for the sunflower to arise again, because the purpose of a phenomenon's arising is for it to attain its identity² as that phenomenon. However, if this identity has already been attained, there is no need for it to arise again.

Were the Samkhyas to reply that it is not contradictory for something to have attained its identity and still have to arise, the following absurd consequence would ensue:

It would follow that arising would be endless, for the sunflower would arise again and again. This is because according to the Samkhyas, although the sunflower has already attained its identity at the time of its seed, it arises again.

Furthermore, if the sunflower were to arise again and again, the arising of the sunflower seed would also be endless, since the sunflower seed would likewise already exist at the time of its cause. Therefore, the sunflower would never be produced because the production of a sunflower follows the cessation of its seed, but an endlessly arising sunflower seed never ceases.

To this, the Samkhyas might reply that the sunflower exists in a non-manifest form at the time of its seed, and since it must arise to become manifest, there is no need for further

² For something “to attain its identity” (Tib. *rang gi bdag nyid thob pa*) as a particular phenomenon means that it becomes that phenomenon. Therefore, when a sunflower sprout, for instance, becomes a sunflower it “attains its identity” as a sunflower.

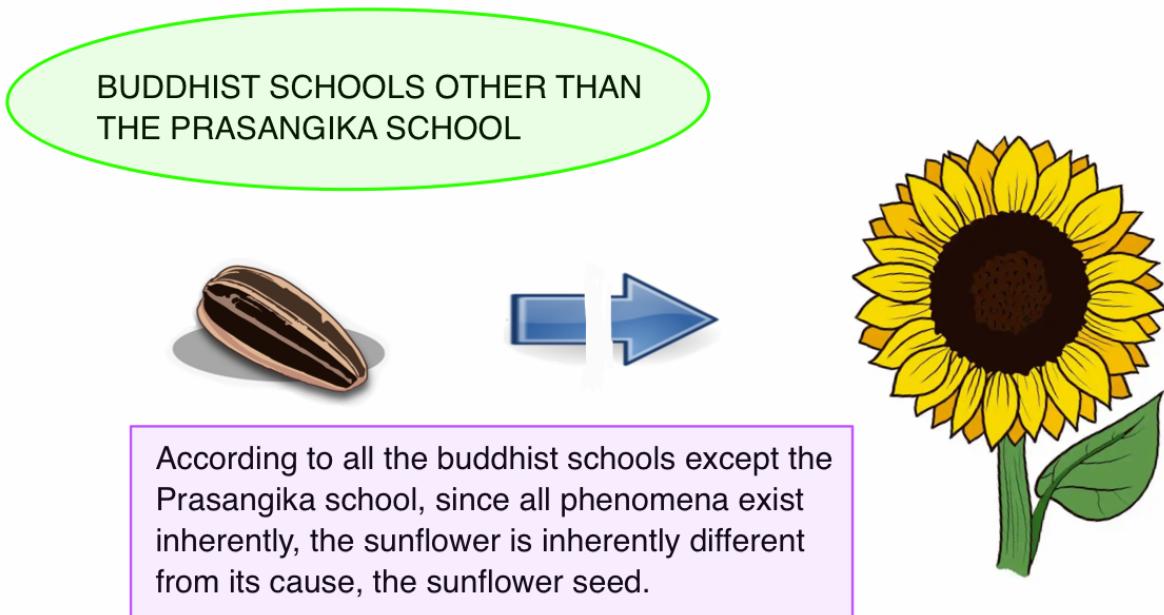
arising once it has manifested. However, this reply cannot rebut the previous logical absurdities, leading to the following argument:

If the sunflower were to exist at the time of its seed—even in a non-manifest form—it would not need to arise, for it had already arisen; and if it were to arise despite existing, infinite arising would ensue.

If, on the other hand, the Samkhyas were to say that the manifest sunflower did not exist at the time of its seed, they would be abandoning their original position and thus the view that something can only arise if it already existed at the time of its cause.

Arising from something different

The second possibility, arising from something else or from something distinct from itself, means to arise from an *inherently* different cause. This is asserted, for instance, by all buddhist philosophical schools other than the Prasangika Madhyamika school, on the view of which the *Fundamental Wisdom* is based. Inherent existence is asserted by the Vaibashika, Sautrantika, Chittamatra, and S�atantrika Madhyamika school. According to these buddhist systems, since all phenomena exist inherently, objectively and from their own side—for otherwise they couldn't exist—a result such as the sunflower arises from an inherently different cause, the sunflower seed.



Refutation of arising from something different

The refutation of arising from something that is different from itself is also based on pointing out the logical absurdities or consequences of this extreme way of arising:

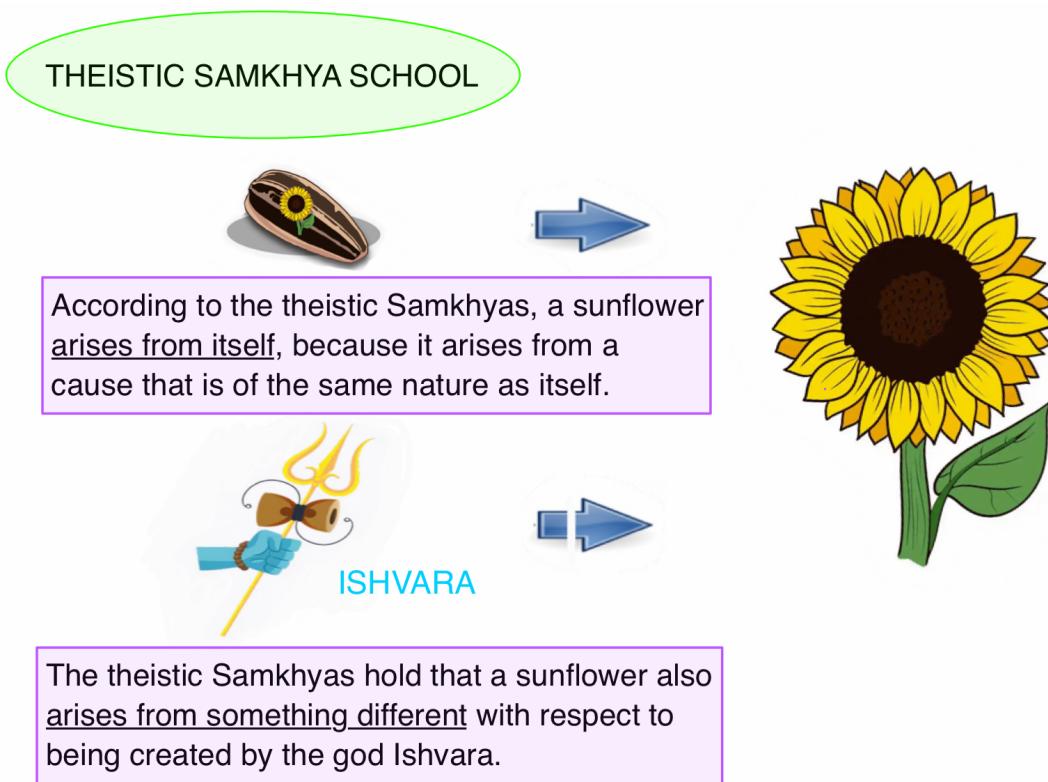
If a cause and its effect were inherently different, there would be no dependently or conventionally existent difference between them; a cause and its effect would be unrelated or disconnected phenomena. If an effect could be produced by a cause that was unrelated to it, an effect could arise from anything that is conventionally not considered to be its cause, because an effect would be equally unrelated to its cause and its non-cause. This would mean that a result such as a sunflower would arise not only from a sunflower seed but also from a rice seed, a piece of charcoal, or any other impermanent phenomenon that precedes it.

Therefore, from a buddhist point of view, since a cause and its result are mutually dependent, they are merely nominally or conventionally different.

Arising from both

This extreme way of arising refers to arising from both itself and something different; it is asserted by the ancient non-buddhist school of the theistic Samkhyas and the Jains.

Like the non-theistic Samkhyas, the theistic Samkhyas (Tib. *grang can lhar bcas pa*) maintain that a result such as a sunflower arises from a cause that is of the same nature as itself. Additionally, they hold that the sunflower is created by the god Ishvara and therefore arises from something different.



The Jains (Tib. *gcer bu ba*) assert that a sentient being arises from itself, because it is caused by the living being from the previous life that is part of the same continuum. The

living being of the present life also arises from something different, because it is the result of its karma and its parents, and so on.

Similarly, a clay pot arises from itself because it is the result of the clay, and it arises from something different as it is produced by a potter, a pottery wheel, and so forth.

JAIN SCHOOL



According to the Jains, a clay pot arises from itself, because it arises from clay that is of the same continuum as itself.



The Jains hold that a clay pot also arises from something different: a potter, a pottery wheel, and so forth.

Refutation of arising from both

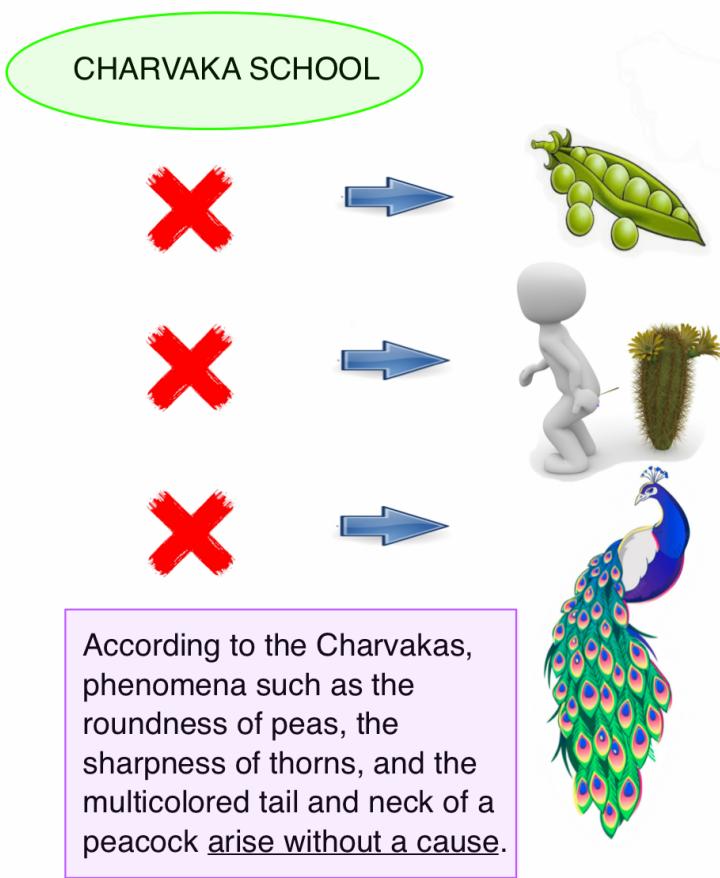
Arising from both is refuted by the same logical consequences that refute the first and the second extreme possibility.

Arising without a cause

The non-buddhist nihilistic school of the Charvakas (Tib. *rgyang 'phen pa*) asserts the fourth extreme possibility, arising without a cause.

Although the Charvakas accept the production from a cause because they hold that the making of a pot, for example, can be seen to occur in dependence on causes such as clay, a potter etc., they maintain that there are some phenomena that have no observable causes and conditions and therefore arise naturally without being produced by anything.

Examples are the roundness of peas, the length and sharpness of thorns, and the multicolored tail and neck of a peacock³.



Refutation of arising without a cause

The logical absurdities of arising without a cause are:

If there were things that arise without a cause, those things could arise from anything. Also, they could arise anytime, because they would not have to wait for their causes to be produced. The ripening of mangoes, for instance, would not occur at a specific time of the year since it would not depend on the seasons. Also, crows would have peacock feathers, and peacocks would possess parrot feathers, for none of those things would be dependent on any causes.

From a buddhist point of view, there are no impermanent phenomena that do not arise

³ Aryadeva says in his *Establishing the Reasoning that Refutes Mistaken Views* (Skt.

Skhalitapramardanayuktiheddhusiddhi, Tib. 'khrul pa bzlog pa'i rigs pa gtan tshigs grub pa):

“Also someone might say: All phenomena, the external and internal sources, are established from the entity itself, not from something different. The roundness of peas, the length and sharpness of thorns, the multicolored tail and neck of a peacock, the rising of the sun and the falling of water are established from the entity itself. They are not caused.”

from causes. The roundness of a pea arises from the same cause as the pea, the length and sharpness of a thorn arises from the same cause that produced the plant on which the thorn grew, and so forth.

As mentioned before, the four-part *diamond slivers reasoning* establishes the lack of inherent existence of arising. The emptiness of arising can be realized by means of the following syllogism:

“Regarding the subject, a sunflower, it doesn’t arise inherently, because (1) it doesn’t arise from itself, (2) it doesn’t arise from something different, (3) it doesn’t arise from both—itself and something different—and (4) it doesn’t arise without a cause.”

The tools to realize the emptiness of arising are the thorough realization of this syllogism and insight into the logical absurdities that would ensue if the sunflower or any other phenomenon were to arise inherently.

It is important to note, that not only the *object that is to be established* by the syllogism (“does not arise inherently”, i.e. the emptiness of arising) but also each of the four reasons of the diamond slivers reasoning (“doesn’t arise from itself, doesn’t arise from something different” etc.) are *non-affirming negatives*.

Non-affirming and affirming negatives

Phenomena can be categorized into (1) positive phenomena (Skt. *vidhi*, Tib. *sgrub pa*) and (2) negative phenomena (Skt. *pratiṣedha*, Tib. *dgag pa*). Positive and negative phenomena do not only refer to statements, propositions or acts of affirmation or denial but to anything that exists. Whatever exists is either a positive or a negative phenomenon and anything that is a positive or a negative phenomenon necessarily exists. Like the two truths, this division of phenomena is exhaustive; there is no third category.

The difference between the two categories is based on how phenomena are realized by conceptual consciousnesses. If a phenomenon is the main object of a conceptual consciousness that realizes the phenomenon by way of explicitly eliminating an object of negation, it is a negative phenomenon. An example is unhappiness. The conceptual consciousness perceiving unhappiness realizes its main object by way of explicitly negating happiness.

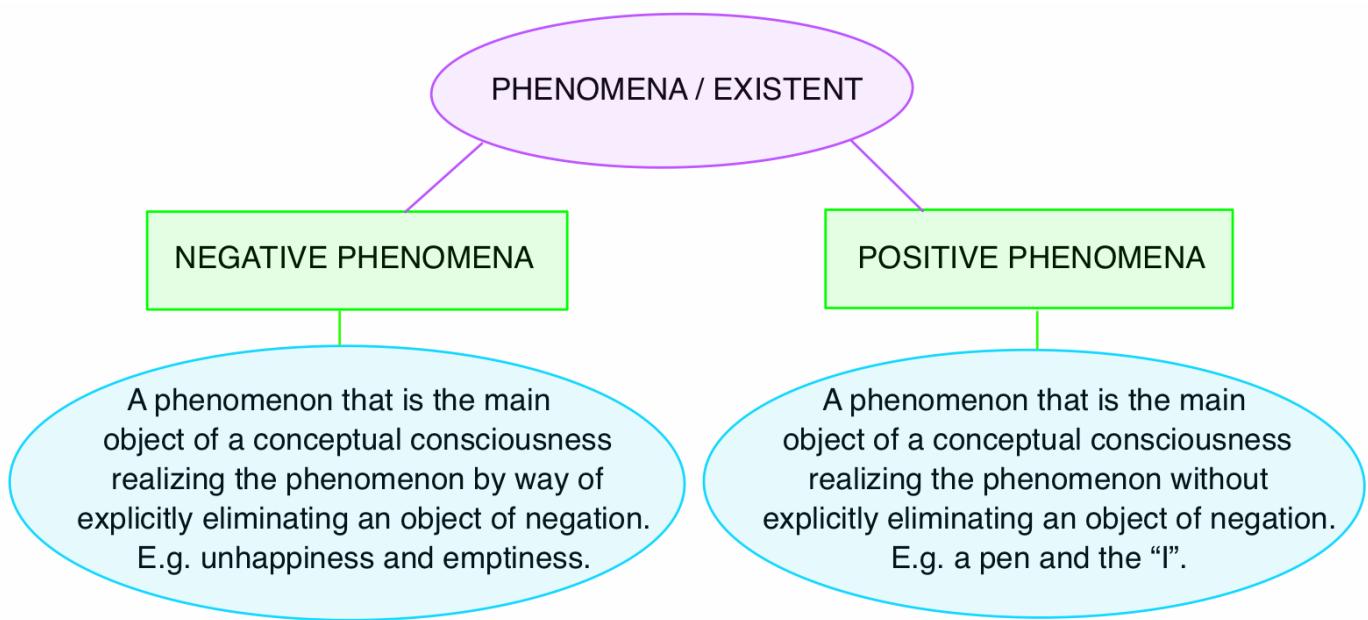
Another example is emptiness; the conceptual consciousness perceiving the lack of inherent existence realizes emptiness through explicitly eliminating inherent existence.

If a phenomenon is the main object of a conceptual consciousness that realizes the phenomenon without explicitly eliminating an object of negation, it is a positive

phenomenon. An example is a pen. The conceptual consciousness perceiving a pen realizes the pen without explicitly negating anything.

That doesn't mean that the conceptual consciousness apprehending the pen does not mentally eliminate an object of negation, for while a conceptual consciousness explicitly realizes its main object—the pen—the thought consciousness implicitly negates *not the pen*, that is, it implicitly excludes anything that is not the pen and in that way implicitly realizes *not not the pen* or the *opposite of not the pen*⁴.

Another example of a positive phenomenon is the “I”. The conceptual consciousness perceiving the “I” realizes the “I” without explicitly eliminating anything. It just implicitly eliminates *not the “I”*; it implicitly negates anything that is not the “I” and in that way implicitly realizes the *opposite of not the “I”*.



Negative phenomena can be classified into two types: (1) non-affirming negatives (Skt. *paryudāsa-pratiṣedha*, Tib. *ma yin dgag*) and (2) affirming negatives (Skt. *prasajya-pratiṣedha*, Tib. *med dgag*)

⁴ A conceptual mind that explicitly negates a phenomenon is equivalent to a conceptual mind that explicitly realizes that something is *not that phenomenon*. So, if a consciousness explicitly realizes that *x* is not *y*, it explicitly negates that *x* is *y*, and vice versa. The same is true for implicitly realizing an object. If a consciousness implicitly realizes that *x* is not *y*, it implicitly negates that *x* is *y*, and vice versa. For example, a conceptual consciousness explicitly realizing that a situation is impermanent explicitly negates that the situation is not impermanent (while implicitly negating that it is permanent and thus implicitly realizing that the situation is not permanent).

The difference between the explicit and implicit cognition of an object is that the object that is explicitly realized by a consciousness appears to that mind, whereas an object that is implicitly realized does not appear to the mind.